

fight for the future of our country, for our children, and for our grandchildren. My favorite modern-day President, President Reagan, said it this way: Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for and passed on for them to do the same; or one day, in our sunset years, we will tell our children and our children's children what it was once like in America where men were free.

Indeed, we will meet our deep obligation to the next generation of Americans. And as we come through this Veterans Day, may God watch over our veterans, our troops who stand watch tonight, and may God forever bless the United States of America.

I yield back the balance of my time.

#### CBC HOUR: POVERTY IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I want to again thank our leader, NANCY PELOSI, and the Democratic Caucus for allowing the Congressional Black Caucus to have this Special Order hour once again.

Before I begin my discussion today, though, I want to take this opportunity to wish a very happy birthday to my daughter Karida Green. I am blessed to have two wonderful daughters and four fantastic grandchildren, whom I was able to spend the past weekend with as we celebrated Kobi's, one of my grandsons, 5th birthday.

I also want to extend congratulations to the Federal team that's now in place in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Congratulations to our new district court judge, Wilma A. Lewis, who joins Chief Judge Curtis Gomez and Senior Sitting Judge Raymond Finch in the district court of the Virgin Islands; to congratulate U.S. Attorney Ronald W. Sharpe, who had his investiture this morning; and also Chief Marshal Cheryl Jacobs, who was sworn in about 2 weeks ago. We welcome all of them and thank President Obama and Attorney General Holder for their nominations and the Senate for their timely confirmation.

And let me once again thank all of those men and women who have served in our Nation's Armed Forces and those who serve today for their courage and their sacrifice, and I also want to thank their families who serve and sacrifice along with them. We in the Congressional Black Caucus and, indeed, I think, the entire Congress look forward also to sometime in the not-too-distant future to honor the Montford Marines with a well-deserved and long overdue Congressional Gold Medal.

But this evening, Madam Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus continues our focus on the need for jobs and to reiterate the call for the leader-

ship of this Congress to bring legislation to the floor that would create jobs. But tonight we also want to call our attention to the continuing plight of the poor in this country and how the budget and other battles that have been fought on the floor of this House and over in the Senate have been hurting them and what is at stake for them also if the supercommittee does not come to a balanced agreement that would reduce the deficit by \$1.2 trillion or more—and, I would say, hopefully more.

Earlier this month, nine Members of the House joined the Fighting Poverty with Faith initiative and took the food stamp challenge. We agreed to live on what is the average food stamp allotment for a week, \$31.50, and I can tell you that it is not easy.

There are over 48 million Americans today who are food insecure. More than 16 million children live in households that are food insecure in the richest country in the world. Millions face hunger every day in this country, a fact that we should all be ashamed of.

These numbers are only getting worse, not just because of the recession but because almost all of the growth of wealth in the past decade went to the top 10 percent of people in this country. For most Americans, their incomes dropped; their incomes really crashed. And the gap between the rich and the poor got wider, a dangerous trend for a country already struggling to maintain its leadership in the world, something everyone should want to do everything in our power to maintain.

For all of our 40 years of existence, the goal of the Congressional Black Caucus has been to close the gap that leaves some communities behind or come out altogether; to close the income gap, the job gap, the housing gap, the health gap, the education gap, and all of the disparities that have been so doggedly persistent for some communities, not because those on the losing side didn't want them to change or didn't work for change but because the opportunity too often was just not there.

Colleagues, America is the land of opportunity and all of us, not just the 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus but all 441 or, really, all 541, need to be working together to make sure that it is for all and not just for some.

This country was founded on the principle that all men and women are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, not to be separated from us. Inalienable rights—the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Many times even when we pass programs that should have helped, they don't reach communities that need them most. Those communities in some cases are not prepared to compete or they may not be priorities for the Governors of those States who often get to decide where those programs go. And that's why our assistant leader,

JAMES CLYBURN, joined with Congressman RANGEL to develop the 10-20-30 program, an initiative that they have taken to the White House and to the Republican as well as the Democratic leadership.

Under this initiative, which seeks to help out the most chronically distressed communities, 10 percent of all funding and programs would go to communities with 20 percent or higher poverty levels for 30 or more years. And it may surprise everyone, but two-thirds of all of the jurisdictions that would qualify for that 10 percent are in Republican districts. I think if it were under any other administration or if it were proposed by someone on the other side of the aisle, perhaps this would have been passed long ago; but today those communities, not all of which are racial and ethnic minority in makeup—many are, but not all are—would continue to suffer and, in essence, be denied those inalienable rights, and that's not the country that we know and love.

At our annual legislative conference in September, we heard from researchers who reported on persistent poverty and its impact on health and the quality of life in the communities that are chronically distressed. Their report tracked the stubborn persistence of concentrated poverty in U.S. metropolitan areas over a period of nearly 40 years. Neighborhoods with poverty rates above 30 percent have been recognized as places with few opportunities for employment and education, high levels of disinvestment and crime, and meager civic participation. Living in such neighborhoods over extended periods of time reduces the life chances of children, whether their families are poor or not.

The report also looked more deeply at a subset of urban neighborhoods that can be characterized as the "original ghetto," extensive areas whose cores were almost exclusively nonwhite and poor in 1970. The report showed that the Nation continues to suffer from racially and economically divided cities, undercutting efforts to reach important goals for our country, for health, for education, for employment and civic engagement.

More specifically, that report found that concentrated poverty has risen substantially since 2000. About one in 11 residents of American metropolitan areas, or 22.3 million people, now live in a neighborhood where 30 percent or more of their neighbors live in poverty. Such neighborhoods suffer from private sector disinvestment, poor public services and schools, and unacceptable levels of exposure to crime, natural hazards, and pollution. The number of people in high-poverty neighborhoods increased by nearly 5 million people since 2000, when 18.4 million metropolitan residents, 7.9 percent of the total, lived in high-poverty neighborhoods.

□ 2010

The rise since 2000 is a significant setback compared to the progress of

the 1990s. The number of people in high-poverty neighborhoods stabilized in the 1990s and the concentrated poverty rate fell, fueling optimism that faith-based initiatives and rising prosperity were reversing a crisis that had grown dire in the 1980s.

Today, however, it appears that the improvement of the 1990s was just a temporary respite. The increase in the number of Americans living in high-poverty neighborhoods tracks directly with the Nation's increasing poverty rate. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of people in poverty grew by 10 million, from 33 million to 43 million, raising the poverty rate from 11.3 percent to 14.3 percent in 2009. Today it's over 15 percent. And we all have seen the Pew report which shows that white wealth is 20 times more than African American wealth, 18 times more than Hispanic wealth, and that more African Americans live in extreme poverty. If this trend continues, it is a very bad prognosis for the economic health of our Nation.

Also, everyone knows that I'm a family doctor by training, training that I received right here in the Nation's Capital at George Washington University's School of Medicine and Howard University Medical Center, so the health of my fellow Americans is very important to me. So I have to just point out that poverty is a sure prescription for poor health and for premature, preventable disability and death. Just eliminating poverty alone would improve the health of millions and the terrible health standing of our country, which is an embarrassment. Or let me quote one of our Surgeon Generals, "An affront both to our ideals and to the ongoing genius of American medicine," as was said by former Surgeon General Margaret Heckler back in 1985, and it continues to be true today.

As many have said, the American Dream has become a nightmare for too many in this country, including those who recently came in pursuit of it, our immigrant community. The Rebuild American Dream movement and many of the Occupy Wall Street protests are all about making it a good dream again, and not just a dream, but an opportunity to make it a reality. As quiet as it's kept—and we, Democrats, have really been too quiet—Democrats have always been about keeping the American Dream alive for everyone who lives and who comes to this country, for making opportunity available to all for a solid education, good health, a decent job, a home in a safe neighborhood, and a secure retirement. We have never lost sight of or lost faith in this. And we continue to fight for it, despite the big money opposition and the special interests who think they will win out in the end, but they won't because we are on the side of the American people, and they will always side with what is in their best interests and not in the best interests of our country.

Before we went out over our break—one more break than we needed—Con-

gresswoman BARBARA LEE introduced H.R. 3300, the Half in Ten Act of 2011, which proposes to cut poverty in half within the next 10 years. In 2008, House Concurrent Resolution 198 unanimously passed Congress and committed us to doing just that, cutting poverty in half. The new bill provides us with a framework for doing it, and we need to honor the commitment that we made in 2008 and pass the bill, H.R. 3300. The Half in Ten Act would establish a Federal interagency working group on reducing poverty. The working group will develop and implement a national plan to reduce poverty by half in 10 years while working to eliminate extreme poverty, which I talked about earlier, child poverty, and the historic disparity in poverty rates in communities of color. The working group will improve how we collect data on those who are in poverty and near poverty, and make regular reports on their progress so that Congress and the American people can better understand the impact of our policies and programs and make more informed decisions about how we as a people treat our most vulnerable.

The working group will be charged with developing and implementing a national plan on poverty with four distinct but interrelated goals: one, to reduce the national poverty rate by half in 10 years; two, to eliminate extreme poverty, those with income under 50 percent of poverty; three, to eliminate child poverty; and four, to eliminate the historic disparity in poverty rates in communities of color. That working group would consult with experts across all relevant Federal agencies as well as outside poverty groups who work directly with those most affected by those Federal programs so that we can develop a comprehensive, far-reaching, sustainable plan.

I really want to thank the gentlewoman from California, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, our former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, for her work on eliminating poverty, for her leadership of the Out of Poverty Caucus, and for introducing H.R. 3300.

We have another bill that will soon be introduced by Congresswoman GWEN MOORE which also speaks to poverty. She's preparing a bill that would reform TANF, and I think everyone would agree that TANF has not really worked as it was intended to. As we look at it, it's created a permanent underclass. Block grants are locked in at 1994 levels. Many who move off of assistance after 5 years still don't have jobs, and they don't have child care. The rise in food stamp usage shows where those pushed off of assistance have gone.

The average age of a TANF recipient is 7.8 years of age. Twenty percent of children live in abject poverty in this country. It has damaged the social safety net that was meant to respond to the countercyclical nature of the economy. When there is a recession, as there is now, it's supposed to be that

last bit of help. So the bill is still being drafted, but some of the things that it would do are, it would stipulate that the number one goal of TANF is child poverty reduction. It would stop the clock during a recession. It would guarantee child care for TANF work-eligible recipients. It would lift all time limits on work participation requirements and the 30 percent safe cap on education. And it would adjust the Federal work participation requirements so that States could get credit when individuals with disabilities participate in work-related activities, even if the nature of those activities or the number of hours do not match the standard TANF requirements. Those are just some of the things that we expect to have going into the bill. And again, in addition to H.R. 3300, when Congresswoman GWEN MOORE introduces her TANF reform bill, we hope that all of our colleagues will support it.

There is an elephant in this hallowed room and every room in this Congress, and that's, of course, the deficit-cutting proposal that the supercommittee is responsible for bringing forth in about 9 days. Actually, it would be more than a proposal because we would have to vote on it as it is, just up or down, no amendments. We hear that there will, more than likely, within those 9 days be an agreement. And if there's any hope for a fair and balanced agreement, it's because we know that the House Members that the Democratic Caucus has placed on the committee will work to ensure that it is. And those are our assistant Democratic leader JIM CLYBURN, vice chair of the caucus XAVIER BECERRA, and our Budget Committee ranking member CHRIS VAN HOLLEN.

We've said over and over again that this plan needs to include a further extension of unemployment benefits, which is something that has been demonstrated over and over again as a guaranteed stimulus for the recession that we're not yet out of. But it also, of course, provides a needed bridge until we can get this Congress to create jobs again. It's been over 300 days, and we still have yet to see the Republican leadership produce and enact a jobs agenda for this country, something that we all know is so badly needed.

And just to talk about where we are, in the third quarter of 2011, 31.8 percent of 14 million Americans who are out of work have been so for more than a year. That amounts to 4.4 million people. Older workers are more likely to remain out of work for a year or longer; 43 percent of unemployed workers older than 55 have been out of work for at least a year. Although those with more education are less likely to lose jobs, once unemployed, long-term joblessness is distributed across all educational levels. And we keep hearing about employers who might have a job opening, saying for those who are jobless, don't apply. Now that just does not make any sense.

□ 2020

Unemployment cuts across every industry and occupation. More than 20 percent of unemployed workers in every industry have been out of work for a year or longer. And in mining, manufacturing, transportation, utilities, financial activities, the percentage of workers who have been jobless for a year or longer is over 40 percent. We cannot get out of this recession without jobs.

So, again, we call on the leadership of this body to enact a jobs agenda. We, the Democrats, have proposed and requested in the strongest way possible that the American Jobs Act be a part of the supercommittee's report. It in itself, because of the tax and other revenue it would generate, is an important part of reducing our deficit. We also want other revenues to be a part of that agreement. This is not in any way class warfare. The poor and the middle class have already given up much, have made major concessions and sacrifices. And in the interest of saving our country, they would likely do more up to a point. But now it's time for everyone else to give. It's the patriotic thing to do.

Unless some, or even all, of the Bush tax cuts, which were meant to be temporary and should have expired already, are allowed to expire, the majority of the deficit will come out of programs that would help the middle class and the poor. The country I pledge allegiance to is a fair country. Congress has a sacred responsibility to keep it fair, and with liberty and justice for all.

If no agreement is reached or if the House and Senate fail to pass whatever agreement is reached, mandatory across-the-board cuts will be imposed. And the President has already said he will prevent any attempts to stop the mandatory cuts from taking place, and I hope that threat extends to mandatory defense cuts, because what we keep hearing is that those defense cuts will just not ever happen. And if defense is spared, the mandatory discretionary cuts would further come out of programs that would help the poor and the middle class and would hurt them even more than some of the budget agreements we have already reached. Some of the cuts that this Congress has already made would hurt the poor and hurt jobs.

Just in 2011, 250 programs were cut that probably eliminated about 370,000 jobs. Those are just some of the things that we have already lost. There are almost 60,000 jobs lost from the spring budget cuts of the Federal Government in three areas, with secondary impact on a wide array of businesses, ranging from automobile producers to local restaurants and dry cleaning establishments. Federal support for law enforcement, environmental cleanup of nuclear weapons production facilities, and General Services Administration Federal buildings fund, those are some of the cuts that have just wiped out

jobs at a time when we need to be creating them.

So we need to make sure that we allow our economy to grow. We need to continue, or begin, to invest in education and health care and renewable energy and innovation of all kinds. The only way we can do this is with a big agreement, but one that includes far more revenue than the mere \$300 billion that is now on the table.

So we want balance and fairness from the supercommittee. We want a jobs agenda enacted. We want to see the American Jobs Act be a part of it. We want to see unemployment payments continued and extended beyond where they are today, and we want to go further to make sure that poverty is reduced in our country because, again, over 16 million children in this country are going hungry every day and living in poverty; and that is something that any country worth its salt should not tolerate.

I would now like to yield to my colleague from Texas, Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands for her leadership, and I'm delighted to join her in what I think is an enormously important discussion. Oftentimes, Congresswoman, we don't get a chance to have this kind of discussion when we are debating bills on the floor of the House. So let me, first of all, add again to your statistics. The more we can recite for people what the problem is, the better off we are.

So you will see us standing over the next couple of days and weeks, and isn't it interesting as we approach Thanksgiving and then the Christmas holiday for many of us, and holidays in different names, Chanukah for many, and many other kinds of celebratory holidays that call upon fellowship and food to realize how many are impoverished in this Nation. So I'm delighted to stand with the Congressional Black Caucus, our friend, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, our chairperson, Chairman CLEAVER, and yourself to firmly stand committed to combating poverty, eliminating hunger, and providing health insurance for all citizens.

Let me just say in light of that, the Supreme Court indicated that they will take up the health care bill. But I'm going to join some pundits and take a risk and say it's going to be upheld. I know there is a lot of rubbing of the hands and excitement because they see in the eyesight the death knell for the Affordable Care Act.

But the good news is that one of the judges that upheld the Affordable Care Act was a conservative judge who analyzed our right to require individuals to have insurance for the greater good—that's not the legal interpretation. And I believe there is sufficient numbers on the court that will look beyond politics and realize that the heavy burden of health care is a heavy burden on the economy. And if you are a conservative, you will look more

closely at individual responsibility. That's what the Affordable Care Act is, along with preventive care and protecting children. So I'm going to be an optimist, and I'm looking forward to the Supreme Court's decision.

But our numbers show one of every six Americans is living in poverty, a total of 46.2 million people. This is the highest number in 17 years in a country with so many resources. And you've heard me say this before, our country is not broke. It can belt tighten. It can move dollars around. I'm glad that the Congressional Black Caucus that is talking about create, protect, and rebuild has the answers.

Let me just say that children represent a disproportionate amount of the United States' poor population. I chair the Congressional Children's Caucus. In 2008, there were 15.45 million impoverished children in the Nation, 20.7 percent of America's youth. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that there are currently 5.6 million Texans living in poverty; 2.2 million of them are children; and 17.4 percent of households in the State struggle with food insecurity.

In my district alone, the 18th Congressional District, a very historic district, there are 190,000 people living below the poverty line, the highest number of people living in poverty in 17 years; and then we are thinking about cutting vital social services such as the supplemental excess, SNAP program, that fed 3.9 million residents of Texas in April 2011; the WIC program; and the Census Bureau also reported that there are 49.9 million people in the country without health insurance. We've already discussed that. And Texas happens to be the State with the highest number count.

All of that, and you're literally taking the front door, if there is one, opening the door and kicking people to the street.

I just want to deviate for a moment as I go over some very important aspects that I think, joining with the Congressional Black Caucus, that if they would only listen, if you would only listen, I believe would move us on a pathway of creating jobs, just as we spoke about in the jobs tour that we participated in this summer.

But I want to be very clear, the Second Mile in Pennsylvania was labeled as an organization that dealt with at-risk children. Those are poor children. Some might ask: Where is she going here? They are the most vulnerable. They are the most needy. And because those children were vulnerable, because those parents were vulnerable, because they were looking for relief, looking for a child to have some sort of, if you will, activity and comfort, maybe even food—I'm sure those programs and trips out of town might have also had resources that children do not have—when a child is vulnerable, they become a target for the most heinous of acts.

If I might deviate and indicate that I intend to introduce legislation on two

counts, one to suspend any Federal funding to any entity, academic, non-profit, State and local government, prosecutors' office that has covered up and not prosecuted or not reported the sexual abuse of a child, excluding if it is an academic institution, funding for scholarships and Pell Grants; and to also indicate funding, ramping up funding, for the Department of Justice for anyone who carries a child over State lines for the intent of sexually abusing a child.

□ 2030

What an untoward national image and international image we have just gotten. I don't worry about football. I'm not interested in the State. I'm not interested in the particular academic institution. I'm not pointing fingers, and I don't know the coach's name. I just know that in the course of the activity of this alleged perpetrator, there may be many more vulnerable, poor children which we're talking about tonight, the most impoverished; and that one person, among others, saw a physical sexual act and did nothing about it.

And so poverty is not only a family not having enough to eat, maybe not having clothing, maybe not having a place to live, but it also means it puts a child in the most horrible, horrific of conditions; almost to the extent, even though you would say that the predator is sick, but it puts that vulnerable child—because that parent may be vulnerable, that parent may not be home. They may be a loving parent. They may be struggling with three jobs, and they need a place for their child. The child may need the comfort and nurturing of an adult, and that child then becomes a victim. So don't think that we're standing here and arguing against poverty just to be arguing. It is a systemic atmosphere and condition that will allow you to be victimized.

Let me go to the supercommittee as I talk about what the CBC, Congressional Black Caucus, is looking at. I will follow the quotes of some I have heard who testified before the committee. I had the privilege of sitting in on one meeting, not very long, and I think they are dedicated Members of Congress. But we must know that this is not in the regular order. This was out of the order, and it came about through the forced need to lift the debt ceiling. In essence, we were taken hostage. So, frankly, I'm going to suggest that the supercommittee yield. They can go through the 23rd, but, in essence, accept the inevitable that there will be no agreement and that this Congress come back in 2012, because we have until 2013 for the sequestration, come back in 2012 and do our business and respond to the suggestions of the Congressional Black Caucus and legislation that many of us have introduced to create jobs, to balance the revenue, and do our work.

And so I want to suggest that there are many programs. The Neighborhood

Stabilization Program has been touted all over America. What it does is it brings dollars into depressed areas where these vulnerable children live, and it provides stabilization dollars, making good on 100,000 properties with \$7 billion, and it allows these properties to be restored for families. In the course of doing that, you create jobs and you don't have these big signs that say, "Foreclosure."

And then, of course, the National Housing Trust, if Congress can provide at least a billion dollars to fund the National Housing Trust, which is a mechanism for affordable housing. When a child has a room, a light, a desk, and a bed and that family feels comfortable, they are less vulnerable to sexual predators, to not having resources, to being thrown to the wolves, if you will. And it will create 15,000 jobs.

Unemployment insurance that many of us have worked on and joined Congresswoman LEE and Congressman SCOTT to extend to the 99ers and to make sure that they can put bread on their table, pay their light bill and get gas to go look for a job, it will save 500,000 jobs—500,000 jobs.

Why is no one listening? It's a simple process. And has anyone heard of a country moving forward without investment in its people? And that's what we are arguing. Very quickly, we have supported this for so long. No one will listen. Everybody that is outsourcing is taxed, and that will generate resources that will allow us to invest back into the Treasury. Then we can invest in the National Housing Trust. We can invest in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. We can invest in the 99ers, and we can provide money to those who are in need.

Give a tax holiday for the first \$20,000 on payroll tax, which will provide the opportunity for small businesses and put income in, if you will, the pockets of many who are in need, who week to week make ends meet and are very much in need of that. As well, to help those who have been chronically unemployed, to not discriminate against them but to give a payroll tax holiday in order to hire the chronically unemployed; so when they see "Help wanted," they will be excited about hiring someone because they have that benefit.

By the way, can we make an announcement here? We are not broke. Companies have trillions of dollars in their bank accounts, and so do the banks, but they keep saying to us they're afraid to invest and let the money go because it's not a stable economy. How much louder do I have to say it's a chicken and egg? Hire people. That's a stable economy. They invest back into the economy, they begin to buy things, and then you begin to manufacture. It's a chicken and egg. It's the cart and the horse.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Reestablish manufacturing. If manufac-

turing makes things, we've got to buy things. How do you buy things? You have money to buy it. And I've been supporting this for a very long time. I'm part of the Manufacturing Caucus.

In addition, it's very important that we do as the WPA did during the time of the horrible aftermath of the Depression, and the Workforce Investment Act would be assisting 8 million people and give all of these people a chance to fix the infrastructure all across America. Cars will stop going into potholes, bridges will stop having cracks in them, and we will be able to put people to work.

TANF, if it were fully funded and if it had an emergency contingency fund that many of us have been speaking about, this would make available—create temporary jobs for adults and summer jobs, but, more importantly, it would create 240,000 jobs.

And the same thing with the infrastructure. Again, how many people have traveled with a limited amount of gas but traveled over bridges and freeways and found them in disrepair? This is a simple process.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. And I would argue vigorously that it is disappointing that we have not been listened to and members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Democratic Caucus, and even today the supercommittee is speaking about not fulfilling the promise of putting the revenue on the table necessary to counter the cuts. I, frankly, don't want sequestration. The vulnerable will be hit the hardest with all of the cuts that are pointed toward Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, food stamps, and others that they allege that are protected, but I would argue that aspects of it are not. I made a public commitment to my veterans last Friday that I would not allow for my vote and my support one iota of veterans' benefits to be cut.

I'm so tired of people talking about that we're not willing to look at Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. No, I am not willing to look at it as it has been proposed by my Republican friends. They know full well how they can cut this. They can follow the Affordable Care Act and close the doughnut hole on Medicare part D, the most expensive, heinous, insulting affront to spending money in the United States of America that was voted on in the Republican majority, Medicare part D that all seniors hate.

□ 2040

Our Affordable Care Act, if allowed to be implemented, would close the doughnut hole—that's one way of doing it—and seniors would jump for joy. In addition, if you start talking about provider benefits, I'm going to publicly say I oppose it. Why? Because I cannot trust the knife. What does the knife do? It goes in and slashes hospitals and home care and others possibly. And when you slash it, you do jeopardize seniors who are in hospitals.

We have to find a way to cut the waste, fraud and abuse; and we've determined that waste, fraud and abuse can save us billions of dollars. So out of my lips, I will not support cutting Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, or discretionary funding. I will support the creation of 8 million jobs. I will support investing in America's people. I will support getting rid of at-risk children, meaning not getting rid of them but their condition, so that we don't have to find at-risk children. What a disgrace that we take that in such a way that we categorize. These are at-risk children, these are poor children, and we just accept it. They're numbers. Well, at-risk children are impoverished, malnourished, don't have good health care, and are victims. And they can be victims of the most heinous sexual predator story, act, of our recent times. Even we've heard of the faith institution that has been under such siege that has made changes—the Catholic Church spoke out today—because it is a disease, it is an epidemic, and it comes out of poverty and vulnerability. And if we don't cut out the vulnerability of our children and families—and in this great country, even the Bible says the poor will always be with us, but they also say be busy until He comes. And that means we should be busy until the Lord comes, for those of us who believe, should be busy until He comes, making the corrections that we have to make.

So I want to thank the gentlelady for allowing me to join her and to express, as the chairwoman of the Congressional Children's Caucus, the work that should be done, the work that we've done on the issues of bullying and obesity and on nutrition. And areas like that are added to this work that has been done by the Congressional Black Caucus.

And I just simply say: Is anybody listening? Because we have the solution. And if they would only listen, 8 million jobs, children who are protected, and families who can get back on their feet and begin to invest back in this country.

With that, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I stand today with my colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss the recent on poverty and healthcare. Together, we stand, firmly committed to combating poverty, eliminating hunger, and providing health insurance for all our citizens.

I am, as we all are, deeply troubled by the report issued by the U.S. Census Bureau. 1 of every 6 Americans are living in poverty, totaling 46.2 million people, this highest number in 17 years. In a country with so many resources, there is no excuse for this staggering level of poverty.

Children represent a disproportionate amount of the United States poor population. In 2008, there were 15.45 million impoverished children in the nation, 20.7% of America's youth. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that there are currently 5.6 million Texans living in poverty, 2.2 million of them chil-

dren, and that 17.4% of households in the state struggle with food insecurity.

In my district, the Texas 18th, more than 190,000 people live below the poverty line. We must not, we cannot, at a time when the Census Bureau places the number of American living in poverty at the highest rate in over 17 years, cut vital social services. Not in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and persistent unemployment, when so many rely on federal benefits to survive, like the Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) that fed 3.9 million residents of Texas in April 2011, or the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Program that provides nutritious food to more than 990,000 mothers and children in my home state.

The Census Bureau also reported there are 49.9 million people in this country without health insurance. This is an absolute injustice that must be addressed. We can no longer ignore the fact that nearly 50 million Americans, many of them children, have no health insurance.

Texas has the largest uninsured population in the country; 24.6% of Texans do not have health care coverage. This includes 1.3 million children in the state of Texas alone who do not have health insurance, or access to the healthcare they need.

It is unconscionable that, despite egregiously high poverty rates, Republicans seek to reduce spending by cutting social programs that provide food and healthcare instead of raising taxes on the wealthiest in the nation, or closing corporate tax loopholes.

Perhaps my friends on the other side of the aisle are content to conclude that life simply is not fair, equality is not accessible to everyone, and the less advantaged among us are condemned to remain as they are, but I do not accept that. That kind of complacency is not fitting for America.

I firmly believe that all Americans can come together to protect the most vulnerable citizens in the nation, to provide relief for the poor and the hungry, because 46 million of our fellow countrymen living in poverty, 15 million of them children, is simply unacceptable.

I urge my colleagues in Congress, and people across the nation, to look at what unites us rather than what divides us. We are linked by our compassion, and bound by the fundamental edict of the American dream that says we will strive to provide our children with a better life than we had. We can, and we must reach a compromise that will not cut valuable services from those who need government the most.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Congresswoman JACKSON LEE, for joining us. Thank you for the work that you do on the Judiciary Committee, and especially for your strong defense of children and the rights of children and the protection of children in this country. We look forward to the introduction of your bills as well, and we ask for the support of our colleagues for them, both as cosponsors and when they get to the floor.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Will the gentlelady yield?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I yield to the gentlewoman.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. If I might, as I close, I did mention education. Many of us know that we are

facing huge cuts in education. Again, who does it hit? The vulnerable children in public schools. And I just have to, before I leave the microphone, mention the North Forest Independent School District, the only majority minority school district left in the State of Texas, targeted for closing, not because it's not welcomed by parents, teachers, and others, but because the State simply wants to be on a budget-cutting trip, if you will. And I leave the podium by saying to my Governor, Governor Perry, as I've talked about impoverished children, don't close, and don't condemn our children who are trying to learn in North Forest Independent School District. And to my colleagues: Education creates jobs—and I mentioned the teachers—but also, it invests in our children.

I thank the gentlelady for yielding to me.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you. And thank you for the optimism about the outcome of the Affordable Care Act at the Supreme Court. I wish I shared your optimism, but we'll take that as a very positive outlook on the outcome, and I hope that indeed your predictions are correct.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the Special Order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands?

There was no objection.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Madam Speaker, after more than 300 days in the majority, Republicans have failed to enact a much needed jobs agenda that will strengthen America's weakened economy. While failing to put forth a solid jobs agenda, they have simultaneously said no to President Obama's American Jobs Act. Sadly students, teachers, first responders, and America's families are paying the price.

The clock is running out as the deadline for a deficit plan from Joint Select Committee on Deficit reduction looms ahead. In these last few days, I challenge the Joint Select Committee to put politics aside and to work together to create jobs and protect America's most vulnerable citizens.

As the unemployment rate remains high, millions of Americans continue to live at or below the poverty line. Texas has the second highest rate of food insecure children in the nation. Last year 4.2 million Texans either experienced hunger outright or altered their consumption to avoid going hungry. I urge the Joint Select Committee to reject any policies that will increase hunger and poverty in America.

We must ensure that the Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction focuses on economic growth and job creation to stop the spread of hunger and poverty in our country. Lastly, I urge the Committee to do whatever it takes to prioritize steady growth of our investments in science, technology, and STEM education. It is when our economy is hurting the most that

we should be redoubling our efforts to innovate our way into a brighter future of new jobs, new technologies, and untold societal benefits.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, again, I rise to bring attention to the Crisis of Poverty in America.

As a founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Out of Poverty Caucus, in 2008, I was proud to introduce H. Con. Res. 198, which committed the House of Representatives to setting a goal of cutting poverty in half in ten years. I was proud that the House passed my resolution unanimously.

I hope that together this Congress can take the first steps toward that goal.

The Crisis of Poverty in America is nothing short of a national emergency and we must begin to act like it.

The U.S. Census recently released their supplemental poverty estimates which confirms what every other survey and report has shown, that communities of color continue to face tragically higher rates of poverty than their white counterparts.

27.4 and 26.5 percent of Black and Hispanic communities suffer under poverty respectively when compared to the 9.9 percent rate of their white counterparts. This is no accident, rather the direct result of a long history of disparity and a lack of economic, educational and entrepreneurial opportunity in our communities.

We know that this disparity is reflected in the rates of unemployment, in the ranks of the uninsured, in the impact of health care disparities, in education, in income and in the already vast and expanding wealth gap.

Doing everything that we can to reduce poverty and to end this terrible racial disparity is not only the morally right thing to do, but it is the best way to jump start the economy as well.

There is simply no way forward for our economy that leaves communities of color and the poor behind.

As I said, it is time to take the first step on the road to cutting poverty in half in America.

I have introduced H.R. 3300, the Half in Ten Act of 2011, which 55 of our colleagues have co-sponsored.

My bill would establish the Federal Inter-agency Working Group on Reducing Poverty.

The Working Group will develop and implement a national plan to reduce poverty in half in ten years.

They would also work to eliminate child poverty, extreme poverty, and finally bring an end to the historic and on-going disparity in poverty rates in communities of color.

The Half in Ten Act would dramatically improve how the federal government responds to the needs of families in poverty.

It is time to work together to dramatically improve access to opportunity for low income Americans so that they can climb up the economic ladder and reignite the fire of every American Dream.

It is clear that our policies and programs addressing poverty have not kept pace with the growing needs of millions of Americans. It is time we make the commitment to confront poverty head-on, create pathways out of poverty and provide opportunities for all.

I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 3300.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### ISSUES FACING AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. It is interesting to see the way the negotiations with the supercommittee are playing out. Some of us didn't vote for the debt ceiling bill. I know in my own case I didn't vote for it because I read it, and I was concerned it was not a good idea.

Our country should not put its national security as a bargaining chip on the table. National security is important to everyone on both sides of the aisle; it should never be used as a bargaining chip, whether or not we're going to devastate it.

On the other side, the defense would be devastated at the same time Medicare would be devastated. If the supercommittee's recommendations are not approved by at least seven of the 12 and then Congress does not pass them into law, Medicare gets cut and so does the national security get devastated.

So who stands to win and who stands to lose in that scenario? Well, we know that when what is commonly referred to as ObamaCare—I don't even remember the real name—when that got passed, AARP indicated, hey, that's a good idea, even though it had \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare. I couldn't believe that some of the groups that endorsed that bill did endorse it because, for one, it had \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare. You know, we've got AARP stirring up seniors right now—send in a petition, tell them you don't want any cuts to Medicare, that you're a member of AARP. And I appreciated those petitions very much. Those people that felt Medicare shouldn't have been cut should have been telling that to AARP back when they were thinking that ObamaCare was a good idea. It wasn't then, it's not now, and it won't be if it kicks into effect fully and people start having rationed care.

So, what would take people's minds off the fact that the President's pride and joy, his health care bill, cut \$500 billion from Medicare and Republicans didn't support it? Didn't think it was a good idea? That's 100 percent a Democratic bill that was ramrodded through with most of the country against it. So the President has to carry that mantle, as do the leaders in charge at that time, the people that were in the majority in the House at that time under Speaker PELOSI as she pushed it through, commenting that we needed to pass it so we could find out what was in it. Well, I had read it. I knew what was in it, and knew it was a disaster waiting to happen. I knew that it hurt seniors badly.

So we come back again to this supercommittee. What do Leader REID and the Senate Democrats—even House Democrats—have to gain if the supercommittee's proposals are not adopted? Well, there will be massive cuts to security, and there will be massive cuts

to Medicare. And that will mean, from a political standpoint, that those same people that rammed through ObamaCare against the country's will will then be able to say before next year's election, look what happened.

□ 2050

Republicans caused a massive cut to Medicare. They're the ones to blame. They'll be able to take people's minds off the fact that ObamaCare was a \$500 billion cut to Medicare to our seniors that will result in them having rationed care, getting on long lists before they can get treated, like happens in England, like happens in Canada. You get on a list to get your mammogram, get on a list if there's cancer there to have it biopsied or if there's a lump, having it biopsied, get on a list, have therapy of some kind, whether it's surgery, whether it's radiation, chemo, whatever kind of cancer it is. You get on a list.

I mentioned before a man originally from Canada who said his father died because he was on a list to have a bypass surgery for 2 years. If he'd been in the U.S., the son said he'd still be alive. But he was in Canada, and because they have the socialized medicine program basically embraced by ObamaCare, then you are going to, you know, end up on a list. That's what happens when the government's completely in charge of health care. It doesn't have to be like that.

When you look at the amount that the Federal Government, State governments spend on Medicare and Medicaid, divided by the number of households in the country, we've gotten a bunch of different numbers, but it appears that it may be around \$25,000 for every household on Medicare or Medicaid. Between \$20,000 and \$30,000 just to pay for health insurance?

We'd be far better off buying them a high-deductible policy and giving them cash money in an HSA, a health savings account, with a debit card they control. They decide what doctor they go to; they decide what hospital they go to. They decide whether they want this medicine or that medicine. And when they go through, if they go through the amount of the high deductible, that's all the money to cover that's in their health savings account, then their insurance kicks in, and we finally get the insurance companies out of the health management business and back into the health insurance business. Because right now we don't really have any health insurance companies. We've got health management companies.

I want to go back to having health insurance companies. Insurance is when someone pays a small amount monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, annually to ensure against some unforeseen event, either a catastrophic disease or accident. It's unforeseen. Don't know if it's going to happen. Don't know if you're going to run up health expenses to that kind of high mark so